

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.*

HARRY M. SHERMAN, M. D., San Francisco.

Fellow Members of the Medical Society of the State of California:

It would be a most ungracious thing if I did not here reiterate the appreciation I expressed two years ago in Santa Barbara when you selected me to be, for the time being, the presiding officer of the society. The honor you did me in selecting me for office for this particular season, I have tried to merit by an earnest application to my duties as these have shown themselves to me. Service is the most direct and expressive way of showing gratitude; service to one's fellows the most welcome form of service; I therefore thank you again for having given me this opportunity to have served you and the society in the past two years.

The president of this society has the privilege as well as the obligation of addressing the society upon a subject which he selects as being one of importance and moment. With considerable doubt about my being able to say aught that can ameliorate any of the untoward conditions under which we work, but with no hesitation whatever about what I am going to say, I beg you to listen and to consider with me the subject that I have selected. It is one which has been, and is, and always will be with us—always insistent of attention—always trite and wearying—but always of great and growing importance: the subject of "The Standardization of Medical Men, with Special Reference to That Standardization Being Understandable by and Appealing to the Layman." This is the clause that must save the subject, here in its presentation before you, and in its concrete application as well—a standardization that the layman can understand and appreciate—a standardization not made of us by him, but made by us for him.

The president of this society, never selected because an executive or an administrator is needed, becomes *ex officio* a member of the executive body of the society—the Council. Here, among men whose tenure of office exceeds his own and whose continuity as a body is assured by the overlapping of the periods of holding office, he learns details of policy formation and control, and business management and administration which he could never know without that association. Here he can appreciate, better than can be done on the outside, the adverse pressure that is constantly on the medical profession and the constant watchfulness and unbroken counterpressure that are demanded to resist it. Here, he learns that directing the affairs of the society and of the profession is a "big business," with many sides and many phases. Here, too, he sees that policies tending to mutual understanding between the layman and the physician are just as necessary to making the service which the physician sells the layman salable, as they are to the marketing of the output of any other "big business." In each and all, methods which make the customer or patient desire

and seek for the product of the manufacturer or the service of the physician, are living methods, and profitable to both parties.

At what point, and in what way can the methods of the medical profession be changed so as to help the layman to want the physician rather than the charlatan, to help the layman prefer the better equipped and prepared man to the more poorly equipped: to make the layman take the same trouble in selecting a physician that he would in engaging a chauffeur or a cook? Have any of you ever talked with some friend about your profession and noted his real ignorance of rudimentary facts concerning medical education, medical literature, medical progress and medical aims? I had such a talk, within the past ten days, with an attorney whose name spells ability and worth, and I found that he had no concept of the obligation that was upon him to know matters of this kind about a sister profession, that he would be quite willing to take a physician or a surgeon on a friend's valuation without knowing where that physician had studied, what hospital or other experience he had had, or what was his particular fitness for any special work. In other words, all he wanted was the layman's physician—he did not think of the physician's physician. The average layman judges critically those matters with which he is acquainted; he takes but little trouble to get acquaintance with matters outside his ordinary experience; he follows the multitude to the physician's door as he does into the shops, and commonly accepts the fate that awaits him with a confident stoicism and the self assurance that his selection had been that of the best there was. It is true that we see him to-day earnestly supporting medicine in its higher phases of education and practice; we see him to-day applauding the gift of thousands of dollars to some hospital or medical school; but we see him *also* to-day trooping after the exponent of the last "pathy" hatched in some errant brain, and we see him again to-day busy in the legislature to qualify the unqualifiedly bad, to legalize that which is unreason, to create by enactment a minor part of therapeutics into a scheme that shall cover and answer for all medicine, or hatching laws to limit and control normal study and investigation of natural phenomena for the practical benefit of man. We see him, too, Janus-faced, denying the evidence of his senses and refusing to recognize fact, through part of his experience in life, and in the next moment guiding his feet and controlling his actions in full accord with the physical and social world around him. It goes without saying that no scheme of things bounded and controlled by fact and by reason can attract and satisfy all of the multitude of the average; he who resents the orthodox because it is such, has to revolt because he is what he is; and he who does not think, no matter what may be the need of it, cannot be caught and held when appreciation of conditions is necessary. But, in spite of the refractory or indifferent character of the mass, there must be some way by which the medical profession can reach them and attract them,

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some way by which they can be shown that better service is here rather than there, that serious preparation through several years must end in greater competency to understand and control natural phenomena than a brief and frivolous preparation, and that the day is long since past when the unknown was revealed to man rather than dug out by him.

It seems to me that this end must be accomplished—if it can be accomplished—by improving the product, that is, the quality of the medical man and his service that the medical profession offers the layman; or, by the elimination of the less fit and the unfit of the cults and “pathies” about us; or, by announcing the medical profession to the layman in such a way that he can understand without thought or investigation; or, by all these ways together.

Now, we do not need, so far as the layman average is concerned, to endeavor to improve the medical product. He is indifferent to the quality, as it is, and does not really ask for a higher grade of physician. Again, so far as he is exemplified by his selected representatives in legislatures, he prefers the short term man to the long term man—he deprecates full knowledge—he still wishes the man who will treat, even though he knows not what he is treating, rather than the man who insists on taking time to learn conditions before he prescribes a course of action. Again, and on the other hand, since medicine has been recognized by the universities, since medical education has passed from the hands of the practitioner to its true place in the academy, its full development has been assured, and its status from now on need cause the medical profession no anxiety. This does not mean for an instant that the medical profession need take no further interest in medical education. The bias views of two state universities in the past two years regarding a pseudo-science show us that the instructor is not infallible, but in spite of these pitiable errors of judgment, the universities have educational ideals to which they are bound, from which they cannot withdraw without at once calling out the criticism of the expert, and with the full knowledge that the lapse cannot be concealed nor excused. Therefore medical education must take its stand with education in general, as a matter of education, and with improvement and development in the university as a whole, or in any individual branch or department, there will come inevitably and automatically improvement in medical education.

Therefore, so far as improving the product is concerned, the average layman does not demand a better physician, and we cannot attract him by offering him one. The universities are going inevitably to produce him, but his coming will not solve the problem I have set for our consideration.

The second possible means—the elimination of the less fit and the unfit—may be put aside as really an impossibility. No sooner does one cult become senile or die than another leaps up to take its place, and no sooner does this one wax lusty and

prosper than a rival appears to share the spoils. Even in that country which was most abundantly ruled and governed, quackery and charlatanry ran riot, and were even recognized as such. Moreover, any method of elimination, apart from absorption—which can be done only when the cult has developed out of its aberrant theories into the lines of pure science—calls to the aid of the condemned all support by the cry of “jealousy,” “selfishness,” and the charge of injustice to innocence.

The medical profession must make up its mind to having always rivals in the hangers-on to its skirts, parasites who profit by its knowledge and achievements, but who pay naught and give less. They can only be eliminated by the layman; but he loves them, turns to them, leans on them, and by so doing supports them. They are like the poor—they will always be with us.

The next suggestion of a means to attract the layman to medicine and away from cults and “pathies” is really a form of advertisement. The individual medical man cannot advertise himself to his public. He can, of course, announce himself as ready for work of some specific sort, but this is not an advertisement in that he cannot personally claim any special or particular excellence or preëminent ability without the loss of professional standing and dignity. But that which the individual cannot do without this loss—a loss which at once negatives the value of his advertisement—the profession as a whole can do; in fact, it is doing it all the time, as in its propaganda for the control of tuberculosis, or of cancer—its public teachings about plague or other contagious or epidemic diseases—its public teachings about home and personal hygiene, or the care and nurture of infants, or the special requirements of the deficient—and medicine is doing this not only without the loss of one jot or tittle of standing and dignity, but always with added merit and renown. Indeed, if medicine did not do these things, and claim excellence and preëminence in the doing of them, it would be quite as much open to criticism as would be the individual who vaunted his own value to the same extent. There is wisdom in the distinction. Individuals are many; rivalries and competitions would be inevitable, ending in discord in the profession and unutterable confusion in the layman. Medicine is single and distinct; its announcements of its discoveries, its accomplished works, its powers and potentialities are made without the possibility of any rival making contrasting or competing claims. Its imitators seize its discoveries, and copy its methods, exploiting them as far and as long as they can for their own advantage, but this does not constitute a rivalry nor a competition, for an imitator, by the very fact of his imitation, is a follower, and so debarred from independent competition.

Therefore, since medicine can announce and also advertise, while the medical man alone can only announce, it is through medicine that he must seek and find his method of advertisement. There is nothing new in this. For long have physicians

and surgeons sought and secured positions of responsibility and eminence, not alone for the happiness of doing difficult tasks, but also for the prominence such positions gave them above their fellows. And now, for the purpose of our inquiry, we must see what mechanism exists in medicine which can be used for this advertisement of all, not of a few—an advertisement which must attract the layman and draw him, for his own benefit, to medicine and the greatest competency of the day, and away from the "pathies" with their incompetencies.

Naturally, one turns at first to the already existent organizations of medicine, and particularly to the Medical Society of the State. Is it in such a position, has it such an organization and mechanism as would make it an adequate medium to reach the layman? Would the layman listen to statements made officially by it, and accept them because of their source? How is the society constituted? What is its membership? To how many of the laity is it known?

Taking these last questions in inverse order for the answering, I am certain that I am not overstating nor understating the fact when I say that ninety-nine laymen out of a hundred in the state have no conception at all of the real motive of the society, no appreciation of the higher in contrast with the lower in medicine; that ninety-eight or ninety-seven out of a hundred in the state would deny that the society could be formed for any but the selfish aims of the members; that ninety-six or ninety-five out of a hundred might acknowledge that they had heard that there was such a society, but would assert that they had no interest in its existence, and that ninety out of a hundred would affirm that they had no recollection of ever having heard of it and no knowledge of its existence. Surely, if this is so, the society would be but an impotent medium of announcement. That it is such must be the fault of its membership. Therefore, what is its membership? How is the society constituted?

According to the constitution, the portals to the State Society are the county societies, and the constitution states that "each county society shall judge of the qualifications of its own members." Therefore the State Society is made up of members of the county societies, with no vote nor veto power vested in the State Society. The county society is the unit, and the state society a federation or union of the membership of the units. Admission to the county societies is by election, based, as it always is, on information and belief regarding the candidate. Once a member of the county society, that society is the primary organization; the state society is some distant annual recurrence to which the county member has access with no further formality. Obviously the state society cannot vouch for its own members; if a question is raised about one of them it must be referred back to the county society of which that man is a member. Obviously again, the state society, supposing it was a competent medium toward the layman, could not certify to the ability

and skill of any one of its members. For every one, then, the society would be a useless method of individual certification of ability, just as membership in it to-day is a negative criterion of ability for all.

Now, I think that this condition, which quite prevents the society's taking that relation toward the laity which it should take, so that the layman would consider it quite as much his society as the physician's, is wrong, and I believe that it can be and that it should be corrected, though I am well aware that the methods I shall propose for its correction will be thoroughly criticized.

In the first place, in order that any organization may be able to certify to the character and ability of its membership, it must select that membership in accordance with some definite standard. This means some form of an examination, and methods of examination are now so improved that much of the current criticism and condemnation of them has lost its point.

I mean here an examination different from and above that of any state examination. We have seen that test so twisted and knotted that it cannot measure correctly. We have learned the error of expecting the inexperienced to wisely prescribe methods and standards for classifying the expert. We must take back into the hands of medical men the examining of applicants for membership in our learned societies. No longer should they find easy access, through a state examination and an election. No longer should they be allowed to demonstrate their professional ability or lack of it by uncontrolled work on men, women and children. This, again is not a novel proposition, for one state society already has, in fact, has always had, the test of an examination for admission to it.

The state society—the examining society—should be the unit in the state; county societies should be the sub-units or fractions, each getting its organization and charter from the state society of which it would be, not a component part, but an integral part.

By these two measures, the establishment of a test by examination for admission to the state society and the making the state society the unit in the state, it would be in a position to go to the layman and say: "These are the members of this organization, every one has been tested and found fit to undertake the heavy responsibilities you have for him; the organization, as a whole, is behind each member. Membership in this society is a criterion of ability and worth."

But:

That would only be the beginning. This society would then have the task of coming openly before the public, not only as a standardizing and certifying body for its physicians, but also as an educating body for the layman. It must frankly adjust itself in relation to the layman, so that he will listen: it must not expect the layman to, in the first instance, come to it. On the contrary, the society must in the first instance go to the

layman, and then see to it that the layman comes to it in the second instance. At the present time, the State Board of Health is the body to which town and city governments and public and quasi-public corporations turn for information and advice regarding public hygiene and sanitation. This should always be so. But there are questions which are not sanitation matters, problems before chambers of commerce, boards of trade, corporations conducting enterprises which need medical supervision, or conducting hazardous enterprises in which accidents occur necessitating the employment of surgical services, and so on; the society should so establish itself in relation to these sister corporations that they would turn to it with no question but that that was the natural and first thing to do for information, for advice, for assistance, or for the nomination of suitable men to take up particular functions. The society should so establish itself in the knowledge and regard of every individual that no man would ever think of sending into the sick room of his wife or his children, nor of calling to his own aid, a physician or a surgeon who was not a member of the society and had not its endorsement of his skill and his morals.

Thirty years ago, when I became a member of the society, its annual meeting, the papers read, and the banquet constituted all. And that was enough. The membership was small, its needs were simple and were satisfied without difficulty. These thirty years have seen the development of a relatively most complex organization out of the original simplicity. But while applauding this and emphasizing the importance of the work now done, I insist that it is not enough; I insist that development is imperative, and I affirm that it should be along the lines I have indicated—by gradual advance and successive small alterations, which shall be properly adjusted and anticipated, and announced in advance, until the changes I have indicated have been brought about. It can never be enough that the society shall expend practically a hundred per cent. of its energies on its own membership or for its own membership. It can never be enough that the society shall be seemingly always in opposition to the laity in the legislature and in courts, even though that position of opposition is forced on it by the laity itself. It can never be enough until the society shall be able to live up to the letter and the spirit of that sentence in the announced object, which says: "to enlighten and direct public opinion in regard to the great problems of state medicine, so that the profession shall become more capable and honorable within itself and more useful to the public." It can never be enough until the society shall surely be, so far as medicine is concerned, all things to all men in this State of California.

Forty-fifth Annual Meeting

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY.

To the President and Members of the House of Delegates: Medical Society State of California. Gentlemen:

As required by the By-Laws, the Secretary herewith presents a statement of the condition of the membership of the Society and, as there was no meeting in 1915, a brief statement of the years 1914 and 1915 is included.

The year 1913 closed with a membership of 2396.

The year 1914 closed with a membership of 2503.

The year 1915 closed with a membership of 2557.

In 1914 there were 27 deaths and 5 resignations.

In 1915 there were 36 deaths and 3 resignations.

It will appear from these figures that there are very few resignations, and that in spite of resignations and deaths the membership has constantly grown.

A word may be added in the nature of a report from the Editor.

The work on the Directory has grown so much that its publication in the latter part of last year was impossible. Owing to the increase of work of all kinds in the office, it has been necessary to add the services of an additional clerk, and this will permit us to more carefully systematize some of the work and probably get the material for the next Directory together in quicker time.

Journal: In the opinion of the Editor, the average quality of the papers in the Journal shows a definite improvement. This is in no way due to the work of the Editor, but is an indication of the fact that our members are producing better and more valuable papers.

The Publication Committee has been at all times of the greatest service to the Editor, and the members of the Committee have cheerfully read and considered a large number of papers. No paper has been rejected or refused publication until after submission to at least one or two of the members of the Committee.

Respectfully submitted.

(Signed) PHILIP MILLS JONES,
Secretary.

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

To the Officers and Members of the House of Delegates:

Gentlemen:

Your Council, as required by the By-Laws, presents herewith a report of the affairs of the Society, including its various activities, covering the period of the two years 1914 and 1915.

The financial statement, together with the reports of two firms of certified public accountants for the year 1914, was published in the Journal for November, 1915.

The report of the certified public accountants of the audit of the books and accounts for 1915 appears in the Journal for April, 1916.

Journal: The Journal shows some slight increase in receipts, and the early part of 1916 shows an additional slight increase. It will also show a considerable increase in subscriptions.